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# Playground is new village green

By Lynn Winton

**The much anticipated Market Place Playground reopened last month and has been acclaimed by excited residents young and old as a welcome new green space in an area that has been sadly lacking one for years.**

I had a ‘walk through’ with Kathy Batten and Roger Chapman, both long-time East Finchley residents and local activists, and Samantha Haycock, from the Friends of Market Place Playground group. They are some of the people we can thank for having the vision for seeing this ambitious project through to completion through many ups and downs.

Their long saga of battling for grants, Barnet Council contributions and fundraising from generous private donors in order to raise the staggering £500,000 needed to do the work has been well chronicled in previous editions of *The Archer*.

In May 2023, celebrated actor Bill Nighy lent his own support to the playground campaign by taking part in a special fundraising screening of his hit film *Living* at the Phoenix Cinema and tried out one of the park’s old swings for himself.

### Considered for closure

The end result after years of hard work is a spectacular ‘village green’ where before there was only a grim slice of crumbling tarmac, a few sparse items of antiquated equipment and a park so neglected that Barnet Council had it earmarked as a potential candidate for closure.



Focal point: The new playground restores a shared outdoor space to Market Place and the schools and roads nearby. Photo John Lawrence

The renovation is a major addition to children’s play facilities in the area. There are small play parks at Prospect Ring and The Mead as well as Oak Lane green space and of course Cherry Tree Wood but Market Place is particularly central and ideally placed for youngsters leaving The Archer Academy, Holy Trinity Primary School and, a short way off, Martin Primary School.

Samantha Haycock, co-chair with Michelle Frith of Friends of Market Place Playground, was euphoric. “I was there at the first exploratory meeting all those years ago and I was there on its first day



In the swing: Actor Bill Nighy at the old playground last year

to see the students streaming out of The Archer Academy and straight into the park. It was joyous.

“Sixty per cent of children in East Finchley live in flats with no outside space and deserved better. And I’ll be going there

every morning to check the sand pit!”

The playground will be officially opened by Barnet Deputy Mayor Councillor Danny Rich on Sunday 20 October at 2.30pm.

*Continued on page 3*

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# The Archer

[www.the-archer.co.uk](http://www.the-archer.co.uk) Email: [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)

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Voicemail: (messages only) 0800 612 0748 for editorial and general enquiries or 0800 612 4027 for advertising enquiries only

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<b>Copy Editor</b> John Lawrence	<b>Production Editor</b> Alison Roberts	<b>Editorial Team</b> Ruth Anders, Daphne Chamberlain, Diana Cormack, David Gritten, David Hobbs, Janet Maitland, Lynn Winton
<b>Sub Editor</b> Lucy Moorman Fiona Macdonald	<b>Distribution</b> Toni Morgan, Jane & David Marsh	<b>Social Media:</b> Justine Csaky
<b>Picture Editor</b> Mike Coles	<b>Finance</b> David Marsh	

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Save a life today: A flash mob of blood donors at a health centre in east London. Photo NHS Blood and Transplant

## BE PART OF IT Volunteers wanted

Compiled by Lynn Winton

**Citizens Advice Barnet or CAB** is an independent charity based in Hendon looking for advice team volunteers who can ideally commit to two days per week. This will include training so you can advise on a range of problems, such as with work, debt, benefits, immigration, housing and more. Contact Naomi at [nbielak@barnetcab.org](mailto:nbielak@barnetcab.org). More details can be found at <https://barnetcab.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/>

**Food Bank Aid** urgently needs volunteers. Flexible shifts means you can volunteer when you want. The team is waiting to welcome you to their hub where they sort, pack and deliver donations to food banks. It is a fun place... and there's always tea and cake! Food Bank Aid provides essential goods to 32 North London food banks who help more than 16,000 people every week. Please email [volunteering@foodbankaid.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@foodbankaid.org.uk) and put 'The Archer' in the subject line.

**Number Champions**, based in N2, is an award-winning charity that helps young primary school children who are struggling with numeracy or lack confidence in maths. Its trained in-school volunteers use games and other creative activities in one-to-one sessions with children. If you have good basic numeracy, plenty of enthusiasm, 1.5 hours/week during term time and you're interested in volunteering from September, please have a look at [www.numberchampions.org.uk](http://www.numberchampions.org.uk) and then contact [volunteer@numberchampions.org.uk](mailto:volunteer@numberchampions.org.uk). The charity is especially looking for local volunteers.

**Community Gardening Project** needs new volunteers. There is a small sloped garden near the entrance to East Finchley Station, known as Station Bank. It has been tended under supervision by volunteer gardeners since 2012. It currently grows a mixture of flowers and fruit but could grow vegetables too. This would be an ideal project for flat dwellers who enjoy gardening. Contact Kate at [k.brown@btinternet.com](mailto:k.brown@btinternet.com)

If you'd like your organisation to be included in this column and listed on the East Finchley community website, please complete the form at [www.iloveN2.co.uk/be-part-of-it](http://www.iloveN2.co.uk/be-part-of-it).



## Blood donors of Black heritage

The NHS has issued a plea for more donors of Black heritage as three quarters of blood needed for sickle cell patients is used in London. Around 160 donations of blood are needed every day for treating patients with this disease in the capital's hospitals. Sickle cell is the UK's fastest growing genetic disorder. It is more common in people of Black heritage and blood from donors of the same ethnicity provides the best treatment. But the shortage of Black heritage donors means sickle cell patients do not always get the best matched blood they need.

Geraldine Parker-Smith, National Partnerships Manager for NHS Blood and Transplant, says: "Giving blood is easy, quick and safe. By giving just one hour

of your time, you can save up to three lives with every donation."

To register and book an appointment to donate, visit [www.blood.co.uk](http://www.blood.co.uk), use

the NHS GiveBlood app or call 0300 123 23 23.

## Medics help stab victim

Two doctors and a shopkeeper gave emergency care after a man was stabbed in the area of Church Lane, N2, on Thursday 12 September.

The 30-year-old victim entered the King Street Food and Wine store at around 8pm to say he had been attacked. Owner Emre Bora rang for the emergency services while a husband and wife who happened to be doctors and were in the shop at the time gave first aid.

Mr Bora said: "Together they worked to stabilise him until paramedics arrived. I am grate-

ful for the presence of the doctors, as their skills likely contributed to saving the man's life." Met Police said the ambulance service and the London Air Ambulance responded to reports of a stabbing. The victim's condition was later assessed as not life-threatening. Enquiries are ongoing. If you have information, call 101 or post to @MetCC re CAD 6603/12Sept

## Covid jabs

Pharmacy CW Andrew, at 32 High Road, N2, will be offering a Covid vaccination service alongside its regular flu vaccination service starting this month.

This will be the first time there will be an East Finchley provider for Covid jabs and the service will be open to all eligible patients who have been notified by the NHS. Patients will be able to book online at [www.nhs.uk/nhs-services](http://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services) or via the NHS app on their phone. The pharmacy team have also offered to help those unable to use the online booking service.



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## PLANNING APPLICATIONS

### Barnet

#### 58 Church Lane, N2

Non-material amendments to planning permission reference 24/0590/HSE dated 10/04/24 for 'Single-storey side/rear extension.' Amendments include changes to materials from render to facing brick and change glazed roof to slate with two roof lights, removal of bi-fold doors to rear elevation to be replaced with french doors window, alterations to internal layouts

#### S/o 2 Taunton Drive, N2

Installation of Virgin Media fibre grey equipment cabinets

#### 65 Brackenbury Road, N2

Single-storey rear infill extension. First floor rear extension. Inser-

#### tion of two front-facing roof lights Flat 3, 60 Fortis Green, N2

Insertion of four roof lights to rear outrigger roof

#### 247A East End Road, N2

Roof extension involving side dormer window, one front-facing and two rear-facing roof lights and new side gable window

#### 5 Leicester Mews, N2

Submission of details of conditions 4 (Cycle parking/storage) 5 (Refuse/recycling) 7 (Boiler details) 8 (Noise mitigation) pursuant to planning permission 24/1469/PNE dated 16/04/2024

#### 121 High Road, N2

Mansard roof extension with terrace area and two rear-facing roof lights to create one studio flat

#### 31 Elmfield Road, N2

Roof extension involving L-shaped rear dormer window and two front-facing roof lights

#### 31 Leicester Road, N2

Non-material amendment to planning permission 23/3755/HSE dated 31/08/2023 for 'Single-storey rear extension with four roof lights.' Amendments include bricking out and plastering the rear door

#### 161 East End Road, N2

New car port in the rear of the garden

#### Haringey

#### 1 Springcroft Avenue, N2

Certificate of lawfulness: proposed use rear dormer extension and insertion of roof lights.





Then and now: The unloved equipment and dark surface of the former playground has been replaced with a carefully designed green space with swings and climbing frames made from natural materials. Photos Mike Coles

# A new space for all ages

Continued from page 1

So after years of crumbling equipment set into an inhospitable hard surface, what do we have now at the new playground in Market Place? A space for all ages, incorporating a play park where children can use all their imagination and energy, with plenty of room for adults too. There are picnic tables, a giant hammock, tree trunk and bench seating, swings, a slide, a climbing frame, a giant sand pit, and a multi-use table for table tennis or whatever other use one can dream up, all set on new grass and surrounded by richly planted beds that will soon be joined by 20 more trees and hedgerow borders.

Kathy Batten, drawing on her long career as an early years teacher in Barnet, explained: "The equipment, all made from sustainable materials, is not run of the mill, but specially designed by play experts so that children are encouraged to spin, jump, swing, climb, slide, and dig.

"With open entry points to the meandering path, people are encouraged off the pavement and into the park to simply traverse, bring their lunch to one of the picnic tables or simply enjoy the biodiverse environment."

Roger Chapman, a committed environmentalist, summed up the result "So what we are looking at is a 'grey to green' scheme, where we have turned an unsustainable place into a natural space that is much more

adaptable to climate change. And it's no longer just a playground, it's about creating a park for all ages for people to come and enjoy."

*If you would like to get involved in the future of Market Place Playground there are two avenues: both Kathy and Roger are trustees at [eastfinchleytrust@gmail.com](mailto:eastfinchleytrust@gmail.com), the charity which has many local initiatives under its wing including the park, or you can contact Samantha and her fellow members of the Friends group at [friendsofmarketplace@gmail.com](mailto:friendsofmarketplace@gmail.com)*



## Driving Aid to Ukraine

In last month's issue, we published an incorrect telephone number for Nicola Cousins, who collects goods for East Finchley-based charity Driving Aid to Ukraine.

If you have items to donate for their 27th transport to Ukraine, please contact Nicola on 07762 096511. The diverse list of current goods being taken, including mobility aids, radios and children's stationery, can be found at [drivingaidtoureine.org](http://drivingaidtoureine.org)

## The Archer needs you

Do you have experience of using Adobe InDesign for page layouts? The Archer is looking for someone to take over the voluntary role of production editor, creating our pages and getting them ready for printing.

This is an essential part of our publication process that usually takes around five to 10 hours each month. For more details, please contact John Lawrence on email: [news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk). Thank you.

## Business networking

A new business networking group has been set up in East Finchley and Muswell Hill and new members are being welcomed to meet on the first Tuesday of every month at the Clissold Arms, Fortis Green, N2.

The first meeting of the Muswell Hill & East Finchley Business Networking group last month attracted 13 attendees and membership has since grown to over 60. Organiser Leigh Brown said: "It seems that there's a real appetite there now for business owners to get together with like-minded locals." It's a not-for-profit group and the next meetings are on Tuesday 1 October, Tuesday 5 November and Tuesday 3 December, at the Clissold Arms from 7pm to 9pm. Message Leigh on 07940 464921 to join the Whatsapp group and find out more.



Where to donate your unwanted household items for recycling

- Batteries to EF Electricals and Sainsbury's, High Road
- Bicycle inner tubes to Bike & Run, High Road
- Cables and small electrical items to EF Electricals, High Road
- Crisp packets to Cherry Tree Café, Cherry Tree Wood
- Dental products (toothbrushes and heads) to Cavendish Dental Practice, East End Road
- Electrical cables to Everything Electrical, High Road
- Ink jet cartridges to UOE, High Road
- Lightbulbs to Amy's or EF Electricals, High Road
- Make-up to Oakdale Pharmacy, High Road.
- Paper, cork, ribbon, foil, wood off-cuts, buttons, stationery, sequins, carpet samples to Amy's, High Road
- Spectacles to Stewart Duncan Opticians and David Hillel Opticians, High Road

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All together now: Neighbours in Cherry Tree Avenue enjoy some of their afternoon entertainment

## From The Archer archives...

By Jane Marsh

10 years ago:  
October 2014

A host of celebrities turned out to celebrate the unveiling in the grounds of Stephens House, East End Road, of a bronze statue of Spike Milligan. The statue has Spike sitting on a bench as if to engage whoever might sit next to him in conversation. Among those present were Maureen Lipman, Roy Hudd, Dennis Norden, Sir Michael Parkinson and the Mayor of Barnet, who congratulated everyone concerned for bringing home a comic genius.

15 years ago:  
October 2009

Local businesswoman Wendy Hallett was named Innovator of the Year in the Specsavers Everywoman in Retail Awards, for her dynamic approach to her retail clothing business. Wendy credited her success to a passion for and thorough knowledge of the retail sector and, at the time, she employed 400 staff in over 200 sites.

23 years ago:  
October 2001

The current plans for improving the pavement space outside Budgens are not the first attempt to give the area a facelift. Barnet Council made £35,000 available for the purpose this month and held a meeting to canvas local residents' views under the Local Agenda 21 initiative, which aimed to promote sustainable development at a local level. Sadly, very little improvement emerged to what was then generally called "Pigeon Corner" from the LA21/East Finchley partnership.

## Last of the summer street parties

By Diana Cormack

What may have been the last few rays of summer sunshine shone on the residents of Cherry Tree Road for their street party on Sunday 8 September. The afternoon event gave everyone the chance to meet new neighbours, admire new babies and to wonder at how the other children had grown in the last couple of years.

Some of the youngsters helped in the setting up, took round the cake for its weight to be guessed and the jar for estimating how many sweets it contained. Others helped the smaller ones to blow and burst giant bubbles and to participate in street games, whilst three

girls bravely (and sweetly) sang in the entertainment section.

Delicious dishes, savoury and sweet, were contributed for all to share and pizzas were made freshly at the roadside. Also made was a 'Know Your Neighbour' chart, with the names of the residents being written in their house shapes. The rain held off until the very end!

Even those yet to move in were included and afterwards everyone showed great appreciation to the organisers on the street's WhatsApp.

## October car boot sale

The regular Muswell Hill Indoor Car Boot Sale takes place this month on Saturday 26 October from 10am to 1pm in its usual venue of Hornsey Parish Church Hall, on the corner of Cranley Gardens and Park Road, N10 3AH.

Buses W7, W3 and 144 stop nearby. Admission is 50p and refreshments are available. For more information, call 020 8368 8180.

## Silver Sunday

Anyone in the upper age bracket is invited to join in the Silver Sunday event at Middlesex University, The Burroughs, Hendon NW4 4BT on Sunday 6 October, with music, entertainment, wellness talks and health checks to celebrate ageing well.

Last year, more than 600 people went along to enjoy the day, which includes a free light lunch and refreshments. Register by searching 'Silver Sunday' on the website [ageukbarnet.org.uk](http://ageukbarnet.org.uk)

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## How to report a crime

- Call **999** in an emergency when there is a danger to life or a crime is in progress
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  - Report crime to your local Safer Neighbourhood Team by email: [eastfinchley.snt@met.police.uk](mailto:eastfinchley.snt@met.police.uk) [gardensuburb.snt@met.police.uk](mailto:gardensuburb.snt@met.police.uk) or [fortisgreen.snt@met.police.uk](mailto:fortisgreen.snt@met.police.uk)
- Find full details for the local SNTs at [www.iloven2.co.uk/local-government-and-policing](http://www.iloven2.co.uk/local-government-and-policing)
- Stay anonymous and report information to Crimestoppers on **0800 555111**

## New ventures for coffee shop in anniversary year

By Yasemin Delen Mokhtari

Coffee shop Dan & DeCarlo celebrated its 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary on the High Road last month with the opening of a new delivery operation at King's Cross and the launch of a sister company called Bart's Burgers.

Since taking over at Dan & DeCarlo eight years ago, owner Mikki Bartell and his staff have nurtured the business opposite the Tube station. After only a year of ownership, Mikki transformed the kitchen space, and hired chefs who he says had "a passion for their career".

Mikki expressed deep pride in being able to support the community during this period of uncertainty and offered his thanks in return. He said: "It is the community and loyal customers that keep us alive." "Dan & DeCarlo has launched Islington-based Brood Roastery



Milestone: Mikki Bartell marks 15 years of his Dan & DeCarlo coffee shop on the High Road. Photo Mike Coles

### Lockdown deliveries

When the first lockdown struck in March 2020, nearly 95% of coffee shops nationwide closed down but Mikki and his team kept going by working with their Covent Garden Market supplier to open an impromptu delivery service.

From March to August 2020, Dan & DeCarlo delivered a wide range of fresh produce and supplies to the local community amidst supermarket shortages. Staff worked tirelessly organising orders into the early hours to ensure next-day deliveries. At their height, deliveries were sent as far as Crouch End and Finsbury Park.

coffee onto its shelves, and deliveries will also be available on Uber Eats and Deliveroo.

### Expanding business

Learning from the whole lockdown experience, Dan & DeCarlo last month opened a delivery kitchen in King's Cross, which will send orders out across the area. The delivery kitchen is also home to Mikki's second new venture, a food truck called Bart's Burgers, which will serve as a mobile catering service and is available for events like corporate and birthday gatherings. Keep an eye out for it at the 2025 East Finchley Festival.



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# Costly clear-up after charity shop smash and grab

By Janet Maitland

A charity shop on the High Road was burgled in the early hours of Sunday 8 September. The thief shattered a section of the window of the North London Hospice shop, grabbed some jewellery from the window display and made off, making no attempt to climb into the shop.

Volunteers opening up the shop that Sunday morning were faced with broken glass everywhere and the dispiriting task of clearing up the mess.

"I'd like to put a great big sign in the window saying 'To whoever is doing this, next time just come into the shop and take what you want - then we wouldn't waste time clearing up after you and you might meet one of our volunteers, a 93-year-old woman who comes in three days a week to serve customers'," said the manager.

Within hours of the theft, the undaunted volunteers had created a new window display on either side of the black and yellow police tape stuck over the broken glass.

Peter Brook, Director of Retail at the North London Hospice, said: "Whenever this happens to one of our shops our

charity has to pick up the bill for repairs, which affects our ability to support more patients. We take great comfort from the messages of support we have received from our community and we will continue to do all we can to provide the best of life, at the end of life, for everyone."

Police are investigating the theft and have offered crime prevention advice. As far as we are aware, this was the first shop burglary on the High Road for over a year. Small businesses, including grocers, cafés, newsagents and pharmacies were targeted in 2021 and 2022 with a total of eight break-ins and three attempted burglaries. The following year wasn't much better with three burglaries and two failed break-ins, but no shops - until now - have been broken into since last October.



Snatched: The burglar smashed a large glass pane and reached in to grab items from the window display

## Heritage skills

Heritage Community Crafts CIC runs craft workshops to teach traditional and modern craft skills to groups of teenagers and adults. They host creative events for under-represented groups of adults, seniors and teenagers, and those excluded from wider society.

HCC have so far run a beginners' crochet workshop and an earring-making workshop with their funding from the Grange Big Local in East Finchley. Follow 'heritagecommunitycrafts' on Instagram where you will find news of a planned workshop at Tarling Road Community Centre, N2.

## Piano pairing

East Finchley Methodist Church continues its series of free concerts open to all with a visit by Brazilian piano duo André Bertoni and Alexander Ribeiro de Lara on Sunday 13 October at 7.30pm.

The pair will perform a programme of works by Mozart, Schumann and Schubert. Admission is free with a collection in aid of North London Hospice. The church, situated on the High Road, N2, opposite Creighton Avenue, is fully accessible.

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Safety net: Brothers Sam and Jake Galson have developed an online program to protect people living with dementia

# Software sends alerts to online shoppers living with dementia

By Diana Cormack

A social enterprise based in East Finchley is working with the Alzheimer's Society to develop software to help people living with dementia.

Brothers Sam and Jake Galson were inspired by the early-onset dementia of a young friend to investigate the possibilities of them staying online safely and independently for longer.

Many distressing symptoms are recognised as the disease develops but, especially for older people, living with dementia can cause particular problems in our internet-centric world.

So, with support and funding from the Society's Accelerator Programme and UnLtd's social entrepreneur fund, they have produced Phylax. It is aimed at those with cognitive decline who face financial risks in their online activities such as buying the same product multiple times, accidentally buying expensive items or falling for scams or financial abuse.

There are estimated to be more than 800,000 online shop-

pers over the age of 65 with cognitive impairment. Many of those could benefit from the brothers' creation of a software platform to track, analyse and prevent repeat or accidental purchasing.

When it is likely a user is about to purchase something they cannot afford, already own or do not need, Phylax will let them know and allow them to choose how to proceed. If necessary, control can be shared with a carer. When advice is not enough, a patient or carer can configure Phylax to prevent certain purchases or require approval.

Development is on-going with funding still needed and the co-founders need your help. Sam told The Archer: "We are seeking to make contact with local carers and people who are living with dementia, to talk to them about their experiences with using the internet and understand how we might best help them. If this issue has touched you, please contact us." You can contact him at [sam@getphylax.com](mailto:sam@getphylax.com)

Though not yet publicly available, there is an earlier version of Phylax currently free to try. For this and further details visit <https://getphylax.com>

**MHC**  
**ARTS & CRAFTS FAIR**  
24th October  
6pm - 9pm

Join us on 24th October for lovely arts and crafts from local people, food, drinks and a raffle!  
All in support of a local charity: CPotential.  
Free entry for members and non-members.

**Location:**  
**The Muswell Hill Club**  
140 Fortis Green  
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This event is to support CPotential, a charity dedicated to providing tailored, integrated therapies for children with cerebral palsy and other movement disorders. Empowering families of disabled children since 1963. Your support can help children continue to reach their full potential.

**CPotential**  
we do





Modern history: The tributes to George Michael and Amy Winehouse on the frontage of the Finchley Youth Theatre. Photos Mike Coles

## Two singing legends... and other famous faces of N2

By Lynn Winton

Have you spotted the two East Finchley legends who recently arrived on the front of Finchley Youth Theatre, the former church building next to Tony's Continental? The eye-catching plaques naming Amy Winehouse and George Michael are just two of a series of 21 created by artist Edward Crooks, to commemorate some of the borough's most notable people and it is very fitting that the Youth Theatre was the chosen site for these two singers who both showed prodigious early talent.

This got me thinking about which other famous faces had the good taste to spend time living here in N2, so I consulted local resident, fount of all London knowledge and Blue Badge Guide Rachel Kolsky, who runs Go London tours ([golondontours.com](http://golondontours.com)).

Whilst she feels rather disappointed that we don't have any official English Heritage Blue Plaques, she loves the design of these new style Barnet ones, and off the top of her head reeled off an eclectic mix of long departed residents who she believes might one day achieve local immortality with a commemoration of some sort.

Rachel said: "One of my favourites is actor Peter Sellers who lived with his mum at 211b High Road, and someone I really admire is Lord David Ennals, a Labour politician born in 1922 with a huge list of achievements. A human rights campaigner, he chaired MIND, the Anti-Apartheid Movement

and was great pals with the Dalai Lama, whose huge portrait dominated his living room in Ingram Road."

Rachel had more to reel off: "Anthony Salvin, the Victorian architect who is chiefly known for transforming the Tower of London but also built and restored scores of churches, castles and great houses. Then we have the last British hangman, Albert Pierrepoint, who executed at least 435 people and lived in Huntingdon Road in the early 1900s."

Rachel told me of many more, culminating with the US chat show host Jerry Springer, who spent some of his early years in Belvedere Court, Lytton Road, N2, and was the son of German refugees who escaped in 1939 only weeks before the Nazis closed the doors to fleeing Jews. His early ambition was not to be a celebrity, but rather the driver of the 102 bus which went past his window every day.

### Famous faces today

Moving on to the present notable residents, *The Archer* respects that many like to live here undisturbed, but others can often be spotted by regulars in Cherry Tree Wood where Cherry Tree Café owner Sharon Harding told me about a few of her favourites. "Actor Michelle Collins is here every day and couldn't be more supportive of us or the community. She will give her time at the drop of a hat to help a young person wanting to get into acting," said Sharon. "And any time comedian Rhod Gilbert loses his dog Rosie he knows to head straight for the café where she'll be waiting for dog treats. Another busy broadcaster is Angela Scanlon who each year comes to support our St Patrick's Day celebrations when we have Irish dancing. A little known fact is that she was a National Irish Dance Champion back home in Ireland."



Top: The new Causeway sign and, above, how it used to look

## Station sign back in place

By David Melsome  
Reader Tina Janering contacted us a year ago to lament the poor state of The Causeway, the pedestrian path that leads from the back of East Finchley tube station to East End Road.

She was particularly saddened by the loss of the sign that points people in the right direction as they leave the station. It had fallen off its wooden stand and then disappeared, after which the stand itself was covered in graffiti, creating a depressing scene for visitors and locals alike. But a year on, and the sign is back! Its smart new version is in the same position outside the station exit and it looks to be firmly fixed in place. Thank you to Barnet Council and anyone else involved in getting the sign restored.

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# Leisure park homes plan under spotlight

By Roger Chapman, East Finchley Town Team

**The next meeting of East Finchley Town Team will focus on plans by developer Regal to build 1,500 homes on the Great North Leisure Park, just over the other side of the North Circular.**

As previously reported in *The Archer*, the site's existing cinema, bowling alley and restaurants will be demolished to make way for a mix of two and three-bedroom flats, new cafés and a public square. The swimming pool and gym will move to a new-build leisure centre on site.

A representative from Regal will be attending on the evening to give a brief overview of the proposals and our focus will be to explore and understand the implications of this substantial development on our doorstep.

Everyone is welcome to attend the meeting on Thursday 10 October from 7pm for a 7.30pm start at East Finchley Constitutional Club, The Walks, N2. If you have burning questions about the proposal do let us know in advance by emailing [eftownteam@gmail.com](mailto:eftownteam@gmail.com) so that we can ensure Regal get the questions in advance and can have answers on the night.

## Oh no, not another one!

East Finchley Town Team are keen to reduce obstructions on our pavements. We are not always successful and you will have seen a new advertising hoarding and electric vehicle

charger, known as a JOLT charger, outside Caffé Nero in the High Road.

We went to the planning committee and objected to this but our objections were overruled. We do not oppose EV chargers but think they should be provided without the obstructive advertising panels. We successfully objected to further installations in the land between East End Road and Caffé Nero and these were withdrawn.

Now there is another Highways notice for a JOLT installation outside Tony's Continental at 138/142 High Road. In this instance the positioning near the permitted fruit and veg display outside Tony's would mean that no one, not least people in wheelchairs, parents pushing buggies and the rest, will be able to pass along the pavement freely in a clear pavement zone they are entitled to.

What do you think about these chargers? We would like to hear your views and you can contact us via email at [eftownteam@gmail.com](mailto:eftownteam@gmail.com) or visit our website [www.east-finchley.london](http://www.east-finchley.london)

See Letters, page 11



Pace setter: Keirha Blake-Lightbody takes the ball and attacks for Finchley RC. Photo Emily Grilli

# Finchley RC, 100 years strong

By Andy Stone

**Finchley Rugby Club kicked off their centenary season on the first Saturday of September with wins for all three adult sides and a sea of red and white shirts across the Glebelands playing fields in North Finchley as the Mini and Youth players trained on the Sunday.**

The club was founded in its current form in 1925. There was a rugby club in Finchley 50 years before that, associated with Christ's College, Finchley, and three pupils educated there in the 1860s and 1870s were responsible for introducing rugby in New Zealand and South Africa and for establishing the Barbarian Rugby Football Club.

First up to play this season were the Finchley's Women's XV v Hackney 2s. Finchley established England's first Women's club side in 1984,

with the next president of the Rugby Football Union (RFU), Deborah Griffin, one of the players.

After last year's success for girls' rugby at Finchley it was fantastic to mark the reestablishing of a women's team with such a dynamic performance from players new and old; Finchley Women winning 43-5.

The men's teams, playing this season in the original 1925 blue and black strip, won their games too. The 1st XV is again aiming high after finishing third in their division last year and won their first league game

against a dogged Datchworth 41-3.

The 2nd XV, promoted in the league and runners-up in the cup last season, beat Finsbury Park 40-26. On the Sunday the Boy's Colts side beat Hertford 51-29.

The club has played at Summers Lane, N12, since 1929 with the Grade II listed grandstand built there in 1930. The 2024-25 season will see many sporting and social events to celebrate the centenary and, of course, prepare for the next 100 years. Spectators and new members are always welcome.

# Thriving Scout group needs more helpers

By David Melsome

**A local Scouts group has become so popular that it has a waiting list to join and has issued an appeal for more volunteer helpers so that it can welcome more youngsters to enjoy its activities.**

The 224 North London Air Scouts has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years with numbers of members rising from 40 to 100. A new Beavers section now runs on a Saturday morning and organisers would like to start a new Squirrels section for four to six-year-olds. "To make this happen, we need to find a dedicated volunteer team," said group lead volunteer Derek Chambers. "We'd love to hear from you if you have some spare time and a passion for helping young people develop valuable skills, make friends, and have fun."

The group's members, both young and old, benefit from various activities that help them learn new skills and build lasting friendships, from backwoods cooking, climbing, and archery to learning about conservation, bushcraft and gliding.

Younger members have enjoyed visits to inner-city



Outdoor skills: The Scouts make a camp fire

back through various conservation projects.

To find out more visit <http://224northlondonscouts.org.uk> or email [del@224northlondonscouts.org.uk](mailto:del@224northlondonscouts.org.uk)



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## Art and craft fair at gym

Muswell Hill Club, the community gym on Fortis Green, is hosting their third Arts and Craft Fair on Thursday 24 October between 6-9pm. Admission is free and open to all. The club hosts the event to raise funds for a local charity and this year they have chosen CPotential, the Muswell Hill centre that provides rehabilitation and support for children and young adults with cerebral palsy and other movement disorders.



Available art: Visitors will be able to browse and buy

The stall holders are selected by staff member Natalie Blanks to ensure a diverse offer of goods including art, jewellery, clothes, glassware and leather goods. Based on previous years, they expect to raise at least £2,000. There will also be artworks for sale in the lobby created by the teenage artists who attend CPotential art sessions.



Iconic: Architecture and signage from along the Northern line, as featured in Jonathan James' book *Below: Archie at East Finchley Station*

## Hidden history of the Northern line

By Charles Haydn

On a typical chilly autumn morning, as you rush to check the timetable before boarding a train at East Finchley, you might not give much thought to the history of this iconic part of the Underground. But perhaps you should.

Our station opened on 22 August 1867 and was originally part of the Great Northern Railway's line between Finsbury Park and Edgware, and like the rest of the Northern line, it is steeped in a fascinating history.

*The Archer* recently spoke with author Jonathan James, about his new book, *London Underground: The Northern Line*, and why East Finchley holds a special place in his heart.

Jonathan's passion for London's transport system shines through, bringing to life the rich heritage of London's 'mass transport system', which, much like the Northern line itself, is full of twists, turns, and untold stories.

His book charts the line's evolution over more than 130 years, showing how three separate railway companies grew and eventually merged to form the north-south backbone of London's transport network. Through vivid stories and



Author: Jonathan James

historical insights, he explores everything from the long-lost stations that once featured on the line to the reason why Highgate station's platform is longer than most.

He also tunnels into what could have been, if the development of the line hadn't been halted by war. Imagine travelling from Mill Hill East all the

way to Edgware without having to change trains... or stations!

Jonathan's love for trains, tubes, and trams dates back nearly 40 years, starting with childhood trips with his father. For a day out, they'd travel from Morden station in the south to East Finchley in the north, where he hoped to catch a glimpse of his favourite tube train... the red ones!

His enthusiasm for the line's history is infectious, and his richly illustrated book, filled with rare photographs, drawings, and sketches, offers readers a chance to rediscover a bygone era and learn about the history of the line. "I've always been interested in trains from that early time with my father and I hope this book inspires others to make their own discoveries,"



said Jonathan.

Proceeds from sales go to the *Young Minds Trust*, a mental health charity for children, which holds special, personal significance for Jonathan and his family. *London Underground: The Northern Line* is available at all good bookshops.

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Entertainer: Levi Roots on his first visit to N2 in 2022

## Best of Black culture

Celebrity chef and entrepreneur Levi Roots, from TV's *Dragon's Den* and *Celebrity Big Brother*, makes a return visit to the Ann Owens Centre, Oak Lane, N2, this month to share more of his inspiring stories.

The Black History Month event on Monday 21 October from 2pm to 4pm will also feature a talk on Black Tudors, insights from Anne Stennett, partner at Curwens Solicitors, a live cookery demo with tasters, and vibrant African-Caribbean music. Book your free place on [Eventbrite.co.uk](http://Eventbrite.co.uk) by searching 'Levi Roots'. For questions, contact Teresa on 07502 989 403 or email [teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk](mailto:teresa.gallagher@ageukbarnet.org.uk).





# Walkers, runners and riders could be in the loop

By Lynn Winton

Many of us will be familiar with the wonderful Capital Ring, which is a 78-mile walking route circling London, divided into 15 manageable sections. Now Barnet Council, inspired by its success in getting people out and about, is proposing a 17-mile Barnet "Loop".

East Finchley is not in the prospective loop itself but our nearest entry point is no distance away in Finchley Central along the Dollis Valley Greenwalk. The network, proposed to encourage walking, cycling, running and wheeling, will connect urban areas with existing walking paths, sometimes merging with The London Loop.

Due to its length, it has been divided into eight segments, including linking Hendon and Colindale to Totteridge

and Whetstone. Transport for London estimates that there are nearly half a million journeys per day in Barnet that could be made using these routes, which would significantly reduce pollution, to say nothing of the health benefits for individuals not using their cars.

You can find more details, including the proposed route map at [www.engage.barnet.gov.uk](http://www.engage.barnet.gov.uk) or get in touch with the project team at [barnetloop@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:barnetloop@barnet.gov.uk)



Woodland walk: A section of the proposed Barnet Loop passing along the Dollis Brook valley



High-flyer: Instructor Daniel Beard demonstrates a spectacular move

## Martial art kicks off for new students

New classes in the Korean martial art of Taekwon-Do have started in East Finchley for students from the age of eight upwards. They are run by Daniel Beard, who has been training in the discipline for 15 years.

Taekwon-Do, which translates as 'the art of hand and foot', is known especially for its impressive kicking techniques but there is much more to this martial art than fighting. It is valued as a vehicle for achieving self-esteem, confidence, peace of mind and a positive attitude toward life.

"Martial arts can appear daunting from the outside, but you needn't be apprehensive," says Daniel. "We strive to offer

an inclusive and supportive training environment, where people of all abilities and ages can train well and enjoy doing so. Whether you have prior experience or not, all are welcome."

The classes are being held in the sports hall at Christ's College Finchley, off East End Road, N2, and prospective students are offered one free trial. Find more information at [risetkd.co.uk](http://risetkd.co.uk)

## Spaces are still available on Grange job support scheme

By John Lawrence

A pioneering job support scheme set up on the Grange Estate in East Finchley has begun helping local residents... and there are still plenty of spaces for others to join.

As we reported last month, the Jobs Plus project has been given funding to support up to 100 people to find work or improve their job situation. The only criteria is that participants must live on or facing the Grange Estate. By signing up to the Jobs Plus project, residents will get one-to-one support from a dedicated Senior Employment Advisor with over 10 years' experience in the employment sector. There is also financial help if required, such as travel costs or tools if you are offered a job, and even a back-to-work bonus.

Unlike many back-to-work schemes, the Jobs Plus team work with a small caseload of residents so that the support they receive is thorough, personalised and effective.

Project manager Andrew Potter said in the first three months of working with residents of the Grange his team had met an overwhelmingly friendly and positive response.

"As we get to know the community, and by accessing the local services within East Finchley, it has been a wonderful experience," he said. "Everyone has welcomed Jobs Plus with open arms, from the East Finchley Library to the Tarring Road Community Centre, Newstead Children's Centre and The Big Grange Local and Martin Primary School.

### Get in touch

Jobs Plus is being delivered to pilot sites across the UK in

collaboration with the Department of Work and Pensions and the Learning & Work Institute. You can email [jobsplus@barnethomes.org](mailto:jobsplus@barnethomes.org) for more information. If you don't live on the Grange Estate, email [boost@barnet.gov.uk](mailto:boost@barnet.gov.uk) who will be able to advise on other schemes.

Andrew Potter added: "As well as looking for people needing our help, the team are also keen for other residents to volunteer as Community Champions, helping to spread the word about the programme on the estate. Please get in touch with them at the above email or pop into the library to find out more."

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## Did you take that photo on your phone?

On display in the foyer of the Phoenix Cinema in the High Road throughout October will be the East Finchley Open Artists photographic group autumn exhibition, including this shot entitled 'Japanese tourists in Paris' by Archer photographer Mike Coles. The exhibition will be available to view during cinema opening times.

## Review: Camden Fringe

Upstairs at The Gatehouse, Highgate  
By Jessica Holt

As part of the Camden Fringe season Upstairs at the Gatehouse in Highgate, I was fortunate enough to catch two excellent and contrasting productions in one evening.

The first was Brother Wolf's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* performed by the award-winning actor, writer and producer James Hyland in which Dr Jekyll gives a final lecture on the duality of mankind directly to the audience.



Transformer: James Hyland

With stark lighting and the actor's only prop a lectern we are taken into the world of evil. James Hyland brilliantly transforms from the respectable Dr Jekyll to the evil Mr Hyde and at one point plays a prostitute with great aplomb. His performance is a master class in the use of body, voice and space. The transitions from one character to another are mesmerising.

As Dr Jekyll attempts to analyse the nature of evil in his lecture the audience is

helped by the references to Jack the Ripper. Questions are raised such as who was Jack the Ripper? Was it Mr Hyde? But we all know he had to be a surgeon or a doctor. I would leave it there except to say Dr Jekyll's only friend was his lectern which transformed with him, a pub bench, an operating table and much more besides.

### Tragi-comedy

The second treat of the evening was FML, a tragi-comedy about four unhappy people who live close to Beachy Head, a notorious suicide spot. Yet this play is very funny.

All the actors play interesting characters with great wit and skill. Their faultless comic timing ensures we laugh with them, never at them. They do have serious issues to contend with. Joe, played by John Berry, and Jane, played by co-writer Elly Tipping, are dealing with an inability to communicate, and Joe's greater fondness for his dog.

Fran, played by Annie McKenzie, is painfully lonely and Jim, played by John Cormack, is terminally ill. All the characters strive for happiness believing everyone else is somehow happier.

One of the strong messages of the play is about community: through helping others we can help ourselves. My only criticism would be there were too many set changes. This company is creative enough to overcome this minor flaw in design.



Playwright: Paul Kalburgi

## Full circle for Paul

An acclaimed play by a writer who has recently moved into East Finchley is getting a 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary revival at the famous Old Red Lion Theatre in Islington this month.

*Almost the Birthday Party* is written by Paul Kalburgi and is described as a 'Pinteresque dark comedy'. Originally staged for a three-week run at London's Etcetera Theatre in 2014, the absurdist romp has since been produced by theatre companies across the UK. Paul originally lived in Squires Lane, N3. As a budding playwright 20 years ago, he wrote sketches for fringe shows by day and worked as an usher at the London Palladium in the evenings. Now he has returned to live in the area with his family. This new production stars Bernard O'Sullivan and John Rayment. It can be seen from Thursday 17 to Sunday 20 October at 7pm. To book, go to [www.oldredliontheatre.co.uk](http://www.oldredliontheatre.co.uk)

## What's On at the Phoenix in October

By Rob Kenny,  
executive director



Our Pedro Almodovar retrospective season at the Phoenix has been very popular and culminates on Sunday 6 October with his 2016 drama *Julieta*, his 20<sup>th</sup> feature film. And that will herald the arrival at the end of October of the director's first English-language offering *The Room Next Door*, starring Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton. This film will be fresh from its sold-out London Film Festival screenings and has already won the best film award at the Venice Film Festival.

*In Restless Dreams: The Music of Paul Simon*, directed by Oscar-winning Alex Gibney and screening on Sunday 13 October, is the definitive musical biography of Paul Simon, one of the greatest songwriters and performers in the history of rock'n'roll.

Granted unprecedented access to the making of a new album, the filmmakers also show never before seen footage of Simon's extraordinary career,

from Simon & Garfunkel to the phenomenal global success of Simon's solo album *Graceland*.

Kicking off the Metropolitan Opera's new season of Live in HD performance broadcasts on Saturday 5 October will be Offenbach's *Les Contes D'Hoffmann*, starring French tenor Benjamin Bernheim in the title role of the tormented poet.

Then the Royal Ballet's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* screens on Tuesday 15 October, with an encore screening to follow later in the month. Tumble down the rabbit hole in this ballet adaptation of Lewis Carroll's famous family story. Journey through Wonderland with Alice and encounter a host of curious characters in Christopher Wheeldon's unique theatrical interpretation. Find out more about the Phoenix Cinema's October screenings and book tickets at [www.phoenixcinema.co.uk](http://www.phoenixcinema.co.uk), or pop into our foyer.

## In memory of my father

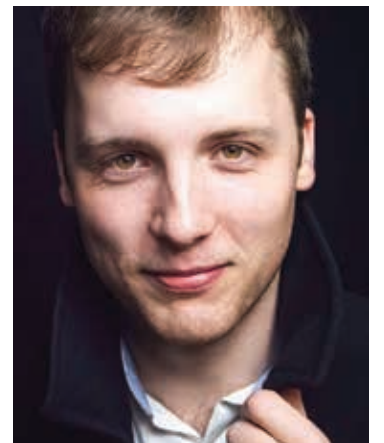
By David Melsome

A freelance musician is putting on a charity fundraising recital in East Finchley in memory of his father who passed away ten years to the day of lung cancer.

Brass player Adam Crighton grew up in Aberdeen and studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama in London. He has lived in N2 for the last year. Since graduating, he's played with the Philharmonia, the Orchestra of The Royal Opera House, the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, the BBC Concert Orchestra, and the Royal Scottish National Orchestra, and performed in various shows in London's West End and at Shakespeare's Globe Theatre.

Ten years ago, when Adam was 18, his father David was diagnosed with lung cancer at the age of 62. The disease spread rapidly and he did not make it through a scheduled operation.

"On the day of the operation on 21 October 2014 I was in London, and once it was clear that something was wrong, I got to Heathrow for the first flight I could catch back home, but due to strong winds my flight was delayed by



Fundraiser: Adam Crighton

a couple of hours, and I didn't make it back in time to see him before he passed," said Adam. "My father's lifelong career was working as a childcare social worker, something he cared about deeply. It is for this reason that one of the charities I will be fundraising for is Befriend A Child, a charity in Aberdeen that provides opportunities to children growing up in hardship. The aims of this charity are identical to what my father spent his whole career doing."

Everyone is welcome to enjoy Adam's music recital on Monday 21 October at Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane, N2. The concert will be at 4pm and last around two hours, including an interval with refreshments. Entry is free with donations at the door.

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## Letters

### Wanton destruction

Dear Editor,

We already have a wonderful leisure centre at the Great North Leisure Park with a fantastic pool and wave pool which our grandchildren have enjoyed many times, as well as a multitude of other leisure and fitness facilities, built only 30 years ago and serving East, North and Central Finchley as well as a wider area.

We continue to feel that both the environmental and financial cost of pulling it down, disposing of the rubble and building another one is shameful and hugely adverse to the environment and Barnet Council's green credentials.

Instead of such wanton destruction of this very successful leisure area, including Hollywood Bowl, cinemas and restaurants, could the new proposed site for the leisure area in North Finchley be used instead for housing.

Failing that, has anyone got a great crested newt to spare?

**William and Mary Tayleur,  
Lankaster Gardens, N2**

### Meaningless consultation

Dear Editor,

Have you seen the ridiculous consultation letter delivered to homes in East Finchley from developers Regal about the Great North Leisure Park?

On one side it shows a small-scale map of the area around the development, with irrelevant and unaffected facilities like a hospital and nature reserve clearly marked. The existing facilities on the area for development, bowling centre, cinema, restaurants, leisure centre are not marked. Why might that be?

On the reverse is the proposed development shown on an entirely different scale with only the proposed 'leisure facility' marked. Nothing else - it's just a green doodle. In the entire letter there is only one single use of the word homes, housing or residential.

Is it any wonder that so many people don't trust developers and instinctively push back against these companies?. They can't be trusted to carry out meaningful consultations and people certainly don't trust them to shape the places where we live, work and spend our leisure time.

**Alan C,  
Address supplied**

### Seats are history

Dear Editor,

Luxurious as it will be to sink into a high-back seat at the refurbished Phoenix Cinema (*The Archer*, September 2024) I do wonder if the upgrade will deter film-makers from using the main auditorium as a location for period productions. It's always a thrill to spot our much-moved local picture house in a movie or TV drama set in years gone by. And no doubt it's been a nice little earner for the Phoenix Trust. Here's hoping any revenue loss will be offset by extra bums on those plush new seats.

**David Brindle  
Durham Road, N2**

Send your letters to:  
[news@the-archer.co.uk](mailto:news@the-archer.co.uk)



Move it: Exercise is crucial to well-being

## Embrace autumn glow

By Sunnah Rose

**As the days grow shorter and the air begins to crisp, it's easy to feel a shift in our energy. While cosy nights and hibernation can sometimes overshadow our motivation, let's embrace this season as a time of renewal and self-care. Autumn can be an opportunity to cultivate new habits and nourish our well-being. Small, achievable steps can make a big difference.**

### Get outside, use the day!

Even if it is not very inviting it's important to get outside when the days are shorter. Drink your morning tea or coffee outside or go for a short walk at lunch. A walk after any meal aids digestion.

### Move intentionally

It doesn't have to look like a workout and you don't have to change from your normal clothes but some simple stretches away from the desk or the sofa or a quick walk around the block can make a massive difference

### Eat well

Try to add more fruit or veg to your diet. While salad may not feel so appealing now the summer warmth is gone, autumn is the perfect season to nourish yourself with a good soup or roasted vegetables. Remember to stay hydrated and drink more water.

### Explore passions

Autumn can have very back-to-school vibes and as we settle back into our routines maybe think about starting a new class or rejoining one that you took a break from over the summer. It could be exercise, a book club, a dance class or even learning a new skill. Engaging in activities will keep both our body and mood boosted.

Sunnah Rose is a local yoga teacher and offers a variety of general yoga, pregnancy yoga and postnatal yoga with babies sessions in East Finchley. Visit [www.stretchingpeople.co.uk](http://www.stretchingpeople.co.uk) for more information.

## Spring in their step

**Newly renovated diving boards are now in use at Park Road Pools and Fitness in Crouch End. They were unveiled on Monday 29 July, the same day as British diving pair Tom Daley and Noah Williams won silver at the Paris Olympics.**

After a long period with the boards out of action, Haringey Council has spent more than £50,000 to renew the diving facilities at Park Road, in partnership with Divegym and Haringey Aquatics Club.

Club chairman David Skinner said: "With so few diving facilities remaining in London, the importance of the refurbishment work cannot be understated in terms of promoting access and opportunity at a grassroots level."

## Stretching workshops

**A series of workshops to help people who have been affected by trauma is running through October and November. The Stretching Through Trauma sessions provide a safe space for people from all walks of life to come together.**

The hour-long sessions blend deep stretching with release exercises and meditation. Participants will be guided through stretches designed to unlock and release the trauma stored in their bodies. Each workshop is carefully structured to ensure that participants feel safe and supported.

Spaces are limited so booking is essential. The workshops will be held at Holy Trinity Church, Church Lane, N2, on Wednesdays 16 and 30 October,

and 6, 13 and 20 November from 7pm to 8pm. To book scan the QR code or go to [Eventbrite.co.uk](http://Eventbrite.co.uk) and search 'Emily Catherine Haldane'



In business: The team from Old Marine Arts Group

## Express yourself

**A new creative hub has opened in Muswell Hill bringing together fine art, fashion, tattoos and body piercing in one studio. Old Marine Arts Group, on Colney Hatch Lane, N10, has two tattoo artists and a professional**

**piercer working alongside a curated collection of art by local and international artists. There is also clothing to buy.**

"Our goal is to offer a full range from the artwork you wear on your skin to the pieces you hang on your walls and the clothes you wear," said co-owner Julie Russell. Find out more on Instagram @oldmarineartsgroup and email [oldmarinearts@gmail.com](mailto:oldmarinearts@gmail.com)

## Two markets in one

**The Courtyard Market returns on Sunday, 27 October, bringing together local artisans, crafters, and makers in The Engine Rooms Event Space, alongside the East Finchley Farmers Market.**

Over 30 local vendors will showcase everything from handmade jewellery, ceramics, and textiles to original artwork, homewares and seasonal gifts.

The popular kids' Lego play table will also be back, allowing

parents to shop in peace!

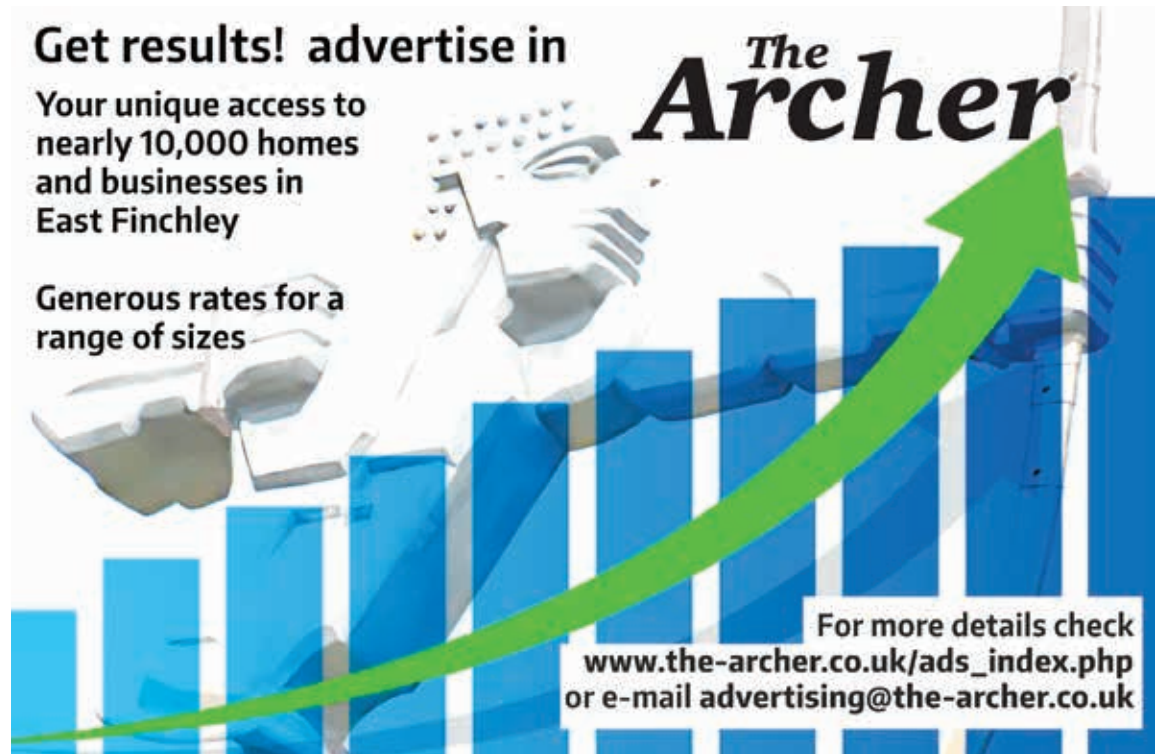
Entry is free. Sunday 27 October, 10am-2pm, The Engine Rooms, 82-92 Great North Road, N2 0NL. See [iloven2.co.uk/courtyard-market](http://iloven2.co.uk/courtyard-market) for further details.

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## Review: The Boys from Syracuse

Upstairs at the Gatehouse, Highgate

By Jessica Holt

**I knew I was in for an enjoyable and fun evening just by looking at the set for Rodgers and Hart's *The Boys from Syracuse*, a mosaic backdrop with lots of witty comments and cartoonish images. The opening number *I Had Twins* introduced the whole cast, setting the mood with eccentric, colourful costumes, simple but effective movement and choreography and lots of smiles.**

This musical based on Shakespeare's *The Comedy of Errors* works well in the Gatehouse's small space enabling the audience to connect closely with the ridiculous plot and characters. The quality of the singing by the cast and music played by a small band was very high.

The standout numbers in this musical are *Falling in Love* and *This Can't Be Love*, both sung beautifully, and although the other songs are not so memorable they blend in well with the narrative and contribute a great deal to the comical nature of this musical.

The twins Antipholus of Ephesus/Syracuse, played by John Faal, and Dromio of Ephesus/Syracuse, played by

Brendan Matthew, are brilliant and are the focus of the piece, but this is ensemble playing at its best. The actors are finely tuned to each other's performance and there is a real sense they enjoy playing with each other and are working hard to bring this piece to life for the audience and they succeed in their endeavour.

There is a real treat in the last scene when the audience meets both sets of twins, Antipholus from Ephesus and Syracuse and Dromio from Ephesus and Syracuse. It's a clever device and suits the comical and physical elements of the show perfectly. Director Mark Giesser is to be congratulated on the creative energy provided by his cast in this flawless production.



Finely tuned: The cast of *The Boys from Syracuse* on stage in Highgate

## An enchanting encounter with nature I'll never forget

By Oscar Bucherer-Ezer

**Stumbling through thick undergrowth with ferns brushing my knees and detritus compressing softly underfoot. Insect wings flutter as they, like me, flee danger. I pause for breath and take in my surroundings. I see nothing but wilderness.**

The trunks of trees, spreading all around and up the gentle bank sloping beside me, stand tall and still. We stand together, my dark green Woodcraft Folk shirt blending me into my surroundings, watching and waiting. Echoing calls carried on the wind sound safely distant... for now.

Suddenly a deeper voice sounds through the trees calling, "Dinner!". The danger having passed and the game of 'It' over, we emerge from the forest back to our dormitories. The week was certainly catching up with me; I'd hbeen outdoors for most of it, the hours packed with activities such as knot-tying, tree identification and acting.

So wrapped up was I in my thoughts that I didn't notice the rest of the group stop in their tracks with one of the parent volunteers pointing to the slope above us. Atop the ridge, peering down, stood a stag, its



Herts and soul: Countryside in reach of north London is waiting to be explored, including woodlands in Hertfordshire and Bedfordshire

antlers fanning impressively out like the roots of the plant life around us. Massive and sure in stature, it was an awesome sight.

Almost 20 years later, the image remains on my mind, as does the rest of that fantastic week. These formative experiences were thanks to The Woodcraft Folk organisation promoting social cohesion and self-development, along with the enjoyment and protection of nature—things it seems this country could do with a little more of.

They are not alone in their activities. These initiatives for young people and their carers are springing up all over. Close to home, at Bishop Douglass School in East Finchley, the Bertha Earth project educates, engages and inspires in much the same way, with workshops and residential trips.

Enriching opportunities for young people exist. All they need might be some gentle encouragement to give these kinds of schemes a go.



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